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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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You wouldn't know it to walk outside at the moment (or this past week for that matter!), but this weekend purports to be the first heat wave of the season! Hard to believe after the raw and wet week we've had, but that's what they're predicting around these parts.

Between the raindrops, I manage to get our vegetables planted, and some of our flowers. Still more to do, but that's getting there. Still a little bit more edging and weeding to do, drop those flowers in, add some mulch, and I'm done! Then I get to work on some bare spots with the lawn!

So, it seems that the U.S. presidential primaries are all over but the official celebrations. Now to start really weighing-in on the candidates; I'm not overly impressed with either of them, but I'm going to have to make some decisions. And do a lot of soul-searching...

Well, it's an early night for me - an early day for work at the golf course. Yeas, we work rain or shine, heat or cold - just lightning and prolonged downpours keep us off the course!

Until next time...

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TeraDesk 3.96 Is Available

Version 3.96 of TeraDesk open-source desktop for the 16-bit and 32-bit lines of Atari computers is available at:

http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm

This release brings fixes to some noncritical problems that were detected and a now feature related to formatting of floppy disks. Work on some other fixes and improvements is in progress, but it was felt that what has already been done should be made available to the users without waiting for other changes to be finished. See the development history file for details.

Have fun.

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, it looks like Obama finally has enough delegates to cinch the nomination, so I expect Hillary to call him any time now and offer him the VP spot on the ticket. [grin]

Seriously though, it's been an interesting campaign, with lots of intrigue and interesting stuff. This is the first time we've seen what happens when a former president goes campaigning for his wife, and the first time we've seen what happens when a candidate has to confront both the race and the religion question at the same time.

For what it's worth, they've both handled it pretty well, with Hillary able to reign Bill in (albeit only after the fact) when he gets all fired up, and Obama dealing with race and religion at the same time.

Sure, they're from the same party, but let's face it, they were opponents too. To their credit, they seem to have a genuine respect for one another, and I wouldn't be surprised if Hillary is offered a seat at the table when top-level positions are discussed.

To be truthful, it'd seem kind of weird to me to have Hillary be the nominee, not because of Hillary, but because of BILL. Can you imagine having Bill Clinton as your running-mate's spouse? Say what you want about Mr. Clinton, he's a formidable person. You'd be vying for the position that he'd once held and, no matter what secret documents and hidden information awaited the winner of November's election, he'd already know 'em.

On the other side (I'm trying to provide equal time here), John McCain has been trying to convince conservatives that he's their kind of guy, while trying to convince moderates and liberals that he's not the war-mongering hard-ass that he comes across as.

I can't help thinking that there's both more and less to John McCain than meets the eye. Like his finances, for instance. Since his wife is stinkin' rich and files her taxes separately, I'm guessing that he's squirreled away some of his resources under her name. I mean, c'mon, the guy listed less interest and dividends in his income tax filing than I did, and I haven't been employed in more than a year. I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with that, or that any of it is shady or illegal, but it makes me wonder. I guess we'll get a better look at both candidates (along with whatever 'minor' party candidates end up running) once the campaigns really get rolling. My guess is that it's going to be another dirty campaign, but with a twist... I think it's going to be a kind of passive-aggressive campaign, making mountains of mole hills, with even less real substance than usual.

And that bothers me a bit, with the questions and problems we've got facing us these days. Like I said earlier: If nothing else, it's going to be interesting.

Okay, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

'AtariNut' asks about alternative desktops:

"Other than TeraDesk, are any of the other desktops still being supported/updated?"

Jean-Francois Lemaire tells AtariNut:

"Short answer: no. Long answer: no, unless I'm very much mistaken."

AtariNut replies:

"Actually, my preference is for Jinnee. The reason I was asking is because, like the other products from ASH, Jinnee is no longer being supported/updated, therefore I'm a bit concerned as to it's future viability."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli adds:

"Thing is in standby, but maybe could we motivate the author?"

Ronald Hall posts this about his adventures trying to find a STacy to buy:

"[I] Just lost another last minute bidding war for a STacy.

I swear, I don't think I'll ever get one - and buying one from Best Electronics or B&C Computervision (as much as I like them) for $799 -899.00 seems a bit steep. Guess I'll just keep on looking for one.

By the way, how many STacy's were actually produced?"

Jo Even Skarstein tells Ronald:

"I know about a Stacy here in Norway. It's one of my old ones, got 4Mb and
a good backlight (which is pretty rare for a Stacy, as the backlight EL film burns out after a few years). If you're interested I can ask the owner if he wants to sell it.

I've got two, both broken beyond repair. As soon as I find a good 9" colour LCD monitor, I will turn one of them into a PC running ARAnyM. I've already converted the keyboard.

I have absolutely no clue [about how many were sold], but considering

the price I would guess that not many where sold. In Norway I think that less than 20 where sold - I've owned three of them and know about two others."

Jean-Luc Ceccoli asks about using large-capacity hard drives:

"Do some of you use large (>15 GB) hard drives with more than 15 partitions? I'm having problems with such drives : when I first partition them, it's ok, but then if I want to change partitions type or even repartition, they cause the system freeze, no matter the OS and the processor (it happens on plain TOS, MagiC! and MiNT, and in 030 or 060 mode - I tried all the cases -.)...

OK, it seems I didn't explain the problem correctly.
One can partition a disk in whatever the number one want and use it without any problem either with MagiC! or MiNT. Mine worked fine for a couple or years.

But then, for installing MiNT, I needed to convert a partition to LNX, which is quite easy with HD-Driver : just select "Change partition type" from the menu bar, then click on the drive you want to work on, and it displays the current partitions scheme, total disk, used and free space along with the drive name and model. This indeed behaves this way for up to 15 partitions - I checked yesterday -, but with more than 16 partitions it definitely makes the system freeze, even if you only try to repartition the drive.
- if you simply want to repartition, the partition scheme is totally wrong, displaying an impressive number of partitions of random sizes, and erroneous data. For instance, when I divided a 4 GB - yes, I did wrote 4 GB, it isn't a typo! - into 17 partitions of 235 MB, restarted the system, then tried to partition it again, It displayed 26748653 as the capacity, 16854851 used and 51816753 free space, and more than 30 partitions of irrelevant sizes.
- if you try and change a partition size, after you select the drive, first it doesn't display the correct drive name and model in the box which you select the partition in, but then, whatever you do, the system freezes and all you can do is restart your system.

So, yes, you can split an IDE drive in so many partitions you want, and yes, it will work fine for as long as you don't try to change anything regarding the partitions. But otherwise..."

Jo Even Skarstein tells Jean-Luc:

"From your description this sounds like a problem with hddrutil, and not the driver itself. You should report this to Uwe Seimet."

The aforementioned Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver, tells both Jo Even and Jean-Luc:

"I will check if I can reproduce this problem."

Jean-Luc does some research and finds a possible answer:

"OK, I've got my answer : it seems one can't partition a drive into more than 15 partitions. Has it been explained before?"

Gˆ ´¶tz Hoffart tells Jean-Luc:

"Of course you can. MagiC or MiNT plus HDDRIVER give you more than 23 partitions."

PPera adds:

"15-20 GB is not so big [an] issue to partition.
But with some new disks you are forced to make some other partition types than FAT16. Then we come to FAT32, Ext2.

I partitioned a 160GB drive to some 10 FAT16 and couple FAT32 parts.. It works flawless in Windows XP, but with Mint I had troubles. It looks to be that we have some limits around 32GB, but it depends on cluster size too. Above that limit different errors appear. Has someone positive experiences with very large FAT32 partitions and Mint?"

’Piotrek’ asks about using a background image with Thing desktop:

"I would like to ask about Thing desktop. Is it possible to use a background [image] in a window?

I am using Thing ver. 1.27 but I could not find it, only possibility to use img picture on all desktops."

Jean-Francois Lemaire tells Piotrek:

"If you mean background images in windows, you need version 1.29beta, available only, officially, from the Author, and only in German."

Phantomm asks about RAM memory in the Falcon030:

"Does the Falcon have any setting in NVRAM or on the mother board for the amount of RAM it came with from the Factory?

I have upgraded a few Falcons from 4megs to 14megs using different 14meg Ram boards.

I ran into a weird problem the other day with a Falcon that I had in storage. The only way I could get it working was to install the 4meg Ram board. Then after, reinstall the 14meg board. Works fine now."

Mark Bedingfield tells Phantomm:

"No it doesn’t. However there are after market simm boards that require jumpers set. I have the Actionsoft and Chromagic Ram Gizmo cards. Both require jumpers for 1/4/14 meg.

You may have just had a bit of oxidation on the socket or pins. Installing the other card may have just removed some of the tarnish enough for a better electrical contact."

Phantomm posts another question about his Falcon, this time with the IDE drive:

"The problem I ran into is with the IDE hard drive. I had a old Factory IDE here, that I put in a Falcon. It was working when it was stored. Now, when installed the Falcon will not see it unless I have a HD Driver Boot Disk. (Displays the IDE make but will not boot the drive)

I have tried using AHDI.PRG in Auto Folder on a Disk. Which helped get it started when I switched Memory boards. As Boot up is Faster with a 4meg board. Unless you hit space bar. But it still will not see the partitions. With this drive installed, it causes the disk drive not to work. I'll get a message that data on the disk is damaged for any disk I try to read.

And it will not boot from Floppy, with this drive installed! If I remove the ribbon cable from the IDE, then It will boot from Floppy. I tried current versions of HD Driver to try getting it going.

Well after much work, I did get it working. then, shut it down and re-booted (cold) several times. Worked fine. Left it alone for 2 days and same problem returned.

The IDE HD is probably Bad, unless there is something in NVRAM thats gotten screwed up. The IDE HD is rather old, I'm not worried about losing it. But does raise concerns with these older ide drives that are around.

I'd like to know for sure, that's its the IDE hard drive and not something in NVRAM. Does the NVRAM have anything to do with the Falcon seeing the IDE?

And doesn't the Falcon suppose to check the IDE before looking at SCSI? It seems that the Falcon is looking at SCSI first, then IDE which I think is wrong if you are booting from an IDE.

Have a question, When the Falcon Boots up, does it suppose to display a message showing the Falcon's ID number? Or does this depend on what type of Driver Software that you are using? I know that normally you get a message displaying type of IDE/SCSI."

Mark tells Phantomm:

"> seeing the IDE?

No. [Hard drive] Detection is written in stone.

Is it supposed to check IDE before SCSI? Yes, always.
It shouldn't be looking for SCSI first. The only way you can do that is with a boot floppy where the boot sector forces it the other way round.

No, it's not supposed to display a message showing the Falcon's ID number.

I'm guessing you may have stiction on the old drive. Its a condition where it doesn't get out of bed quickly enough for the system to recognise it, tho it improves if the drive has already spun up. There

is a floppy you could create with a boot delay that gives the drive a second or two longer to boot allowing the system time to detect it. I can't remember what it was called tho."

Djokdje Vukovic posts this about TeraDesk:

"Version 3.96 of TeraDesk open-source desktop for the 16-bit and 32-bit lines of Atari computers is available at:

http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm

This release brings fixes to some noncritical problems that were detected and a now feature related to formatting of floppy disks. Work on some other fixes and improvements is in progress, but it was felt that what has already been done should be made available to the users without waiting for other changes to be finished. See the development history file for details."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Power Bills Soaring?
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Qore Ready for PS3!
Summer of Fun!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Sony Ready To Launch Qore for PS3 Players

Sony has begun the countdown to Qore. An addition to the PlayStation Network (PSN), the subscription-based gaming program will debut Thursday.

Available only on the PlayStation Store on PSN, Qore is the first in a series of original content planned for the PlayStation community. Qore will feature exclusive multimedia news, developer interviews, in-depth game previews, and behind-the-scene looks at popular PlayStation games. Sony said subscribers will also have special access to game demos, betas, add-ons and other downloadable and game-related content.

"Qore is the first step in providing original content dedicated to the PlayStation community and evolving the network into a place where our customers can gather, share and discover new forms of entertainment," said Peter Dille, senior vice president of marketing at Sony Computer Entertainment America.

Qore episodes will be available the first Thursday of every month to coordinate with weekly PlayStation Store updates. The first episode will feature SOCOM: US. Navy SEALs Confrontation, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, Secret Agent Clank, Soul Calibur 4, and Afro Samurai, as well as the latest Blu-ray Disc trailers, an exclusive SOCOM: Confrontation theme with an invitation to the SOCOM: Confrontation beta, art galleries, and a few other surprises.

The high-definition, interactive Qore lets members customize their experience through the Sixaxis or DualShock 3 wireless controllers. Sony said gamers will "act as the director" of the content and can access and control how they want to view content, using multiple windows, picture-in-picture and other features. Qore also offers advertisers interactive advertising opportunities through rich-media executions, video trailers, active ad pages, and contextual branding.

Gamers can purchase episodes of Qore through the PlayStation Store for an introductory price of $2.99, or an annual subscription for $24.99. Sony is offering bonuses with annual subscriptions. For example, annual subscribers will receive 13 episodes of Qore. In addition, for a limited time, annual subscribers also receive free the PlayStation Network game Calling All Cars.

Is there a market for these episodes? According to Mike Goodman, a video-game analyst at Yankee Group, there’s a market for exclusive content. "People are certainly paying for exclusive content on Microsoft, and gamers are paying for things on PlayStation Network already," he said. "They are doing game downloads there. If you follow the road map that Microsoft has followed for rental and sell-through, gamers are paying for video there. So there’s certainly a marketplace."

PSN is an entertainment network aimed at digitally delivering innovative content and fostering a community for a worldwide audience. The network has eight million members, according to Sony, and Qore is the latest addition. But Sony is still very much in building mode versus its rival, Microsoft’s Xbox Live, Goodman said.

"The PlayStation Network pales in comparison to the features and design of Xbox Live. It is where Xbox Live was maybe two years ago," he said. "Sony just redesigned and re-rolled out PlayStation Network and they are still working on getting the kinks out of it."

Ninjas, Legos A Good Summer Start for Gamers

The start of summer is often bittersweet for gamers: there is lots of free time to play, but typically few new releases to fill the long days.

Things are different this year, though, with a strong slate of highly anticipated games over the next few weeks pointing to a possible shift in the industry’s dynamics.

"The industry is maturing and it’s just becoming less seasonal because of that," said Todd Greenwald, an analyst with Signal Hill Capital. "The games are what drive sales, not so much the economy or seasonality."

June is kicking off with a pair of big titles that couldn’t be more different: "Lego Indiana Jones" and "Ninja Gaiden 2."

The toy brick version of everyone’s favorite whip-cracking archaeologist is patterned after the hit "Lego Star Wars" games from LucasArts. Players guide Indy and other characters through key scenes from the first three movies playfully recreated out of virtual Lego pieces.

"The game is very much a nostalgia-fest, people can relive the glory of the past Indy movies," said Garnett Lee, executive previews editor at 1UP Network.

The game’s slapstick humor, clever puzzles and ability for two people to work through the game together should make it appealing for families.

That’s not the case for "Ninja Gaiden 2," a sequel to Tecmo Ltd’s blood-spurting action game.

"Ninja Gaiden 2" is not for gaming novices since it retains the punishing difficulty of its predecessor. It is also not for the faint of heart, as players hack through hordes of enemies.

Review site GameSpy called it "a beautiful game, a violent canvas awash in streaming gouts of bloody red and slimy greens." The game is only for Microsoft’s Xbox 360.

Next week sees another sequel to a beloved franchise as "Metal Gear Solid 4" hits store shelves in one of the most highly anticipated releases for Sony’s PlayStation 3.

Sony is counting on the game, from Japan’s Konami, to boost sales of the PS3, which has lagged the Xbox 360 and Nintendo’s Wii.

"Metal Gear Solid 4" wraps up the adventures of the series’ hero, Solid Snake, and sports its famous "stealth-action" gameplay that has players act covertly to achieve objectives rather than just gun down waves of enemies.

"It’s a war zone, so there is shooting as side A fights side B, but there’s a lot of freedom so you can take advantage of being in a war zone and find various ways to play," creator Hideo Kojima told Reuters in a recent interview.

Electronic Arts is rolling out two titles in June. "Battlefield: Bad Company" is the latest attempt to bring its popular PC military shooting series to consoles. "Spore Creature Creator" gives gamers a taste of the upcoming game from "Sims" creator Will Wright that lets players turn microbes into a galaxy-spanning civilization.

Music fans can look forward to not one but two "Guitar Hero" games.

"Guitar Hero: On Tour," for the Nintendo DS, is Activision’s first crack at bringing its wildly popular series to a hand-held game device.

Would-be rockers can play 25 songs from Nirvana, ZZ Top and other groups

by hitting buttons on an accessory that plugs into the DS while brushing a pick across the touch screen.

For home consoles, "Guitar Hero: Aerosmith" features dozens of the band's hits, including "Sweet Emotion" and "Walk This Way," and will be sort of an interactive retrospective for the best-selling U.S. rock act.

"Having seen the song selection on there, it's going to be a popular game. It hits in the wheelhouse of the whole 'air-guitar-I'm-going-to-be-a-rock star' phenomenon," Lee said.

Power Bills Soaring? Turn Off The Playstation

Don't blame the fridge for your steep power bills - an Australian consumer agency study has found that videogame consoles and plasma flat-screen TVs are major electricity guzzlers, even when left on stand-by.

The recent study by Choice said Sony Corp's Playstation 3, closely followed by Microsoft's Xbox 360 and plasma television sets, consumed the most power out of a list of 16 electronic devices tested, including laptops, stereo systems and DVD players.

"Our tests found that leaving a Playstation 3 on while not in use would cost almost... five times more than it would take to run a refrigerator for the same yearly period," said the study which was published on Choice's website www.choice.com.au.

"The plasma TV set was also a power hungry device, consuming over four times more power than a traditional analogue set. The average desktop computer was third on the list."

The report advised consumers to switch off their electronic devices at the source, rather than just from the remote control, which puts them on power-consuming stand-by mode. "This saves on money, not to mention carbon emissions," it added.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Yahoo Opposed Google Deal Before Microsoft Bid

Yahoo Inc executives dismissed a search-advertising deal with Google due to antitrust concerns, one day before Microsoft Corp made its takeover offer earlier this year, according to court documents made public on Monday.

The position came to light in a complaint filed by attorneys

representing two Michigan pension funds in a shareholder lawsuit that aims to revoke Yahoo takeover defenses and press the company to renew merger talks with Microsoft.

"We are focused on long-term value creation rather than short-term gains," said a Yahoo document prepared for Yahoo executives ahead of an "all hands" internal meeting on January 30 - the day before Microsoft made its merger offer.

Bracing for employee questions over whether Yahoo should outsource its search-ad sales to Google, executives were prepared to argue that any short-term gains would derail Yahoo's long-term push to become a "must buy" for advertisers.

"Short-term analysis of the revenue potential of outsourcing monetization may not take into account the longer term impact on the competitive market if search becomes an effective monopoly," an excerpt from the company document said. Monetization refers to sales of search-related ads.

These comments appear to contrast with Yahoo's subsequent position when it announced on April 9 that it was conducting a test with rival Google, the market leader in Web search and related advertising, to rely on Google to sell its search ads.

The turnabout was part of a strategy by Yahoo management to seek alternatives for its business instead of settling for Microsoft's cash-and-stock offer at $31 per share, which the company's board had rejected as undervaluing Yahoo's assets.

Microsoft challenged the possible Google-Yahoo tie-up as anti-competitive, citing Google's growing dominance of the Web search business and its even larger share of ad sales tied to Web search results. Government regulators also rushed to say they would investigate any Google-Yahoo partnership.

Web search is increasingly strategic as most people find information on the Internet via such systems. Search-based advertising, because of its high degree of targeting, has become a great money spinner for Google.

Yahoo has acknowledged that a gap exists between what it makes running its own advertising alongside its search results and the improved payback it could see by using Google's ad-sales systems in conjunction with Yahoo's search operation.

"We, in fact, have some understanding of what they (Google) could do for us and what we could do for them," Yahoo Chief Executive Jerry Yang told a conference last week.

A Delaware Chancery Court judge ruled on Monday that excerpts from confidential Yahoo company documents could be made public in the investor suit after initially sealing some of the information in a filing made last month.

A Yahoo statement said the company was disappointed at the judge's ruling to unseal Yahoo internal documents but said it would have little bearing on the outcome of the case. A company spokeswoman would not comment on papers revealed in the case.

Icahn To Seek Removal of Yahoo CEO Yang

Billionaire investor Carl Icahn would seek to remove Jerry Yang as chief executive of Yahoo Inc if Icahn succeeded in a proxy battle against the company over its failure to reach a deal with Microsoft Corp, The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday.

Icahn has proposed an alternate slate of directors for Yahoo’s board, but has yet to directly target Yang over the breakdown in talks early this month for a $47.5 billion deal.

"It’s no longer a mystery to me why Microsoft’s offer isn’t around," the Journal quoted Icahn as saying. "How can Yahoo keep saying they’re willing to negotiate and sell the company on the one hand, while at the same time they’re completely sabotaging the process without telling anyone?"

Yahoo fired back in a statement: "Yahoo’s board of directors, including Jerry Yang, has been crystal clear that it would consider any proposal by Microsoft that was in the best interests of its shareholders."

The Sunnyvale, California-based company said Yahoo has been in extensive talks with Microsoft for the last several months, culminating in Microsoft’s decision not to pursue a deal. "Mr. Icahn’s assertions ignore this clear factual record."

Microsoft said it has no comment on Icahn’s actions. The two companies are in contact with each other but have nothing to announce at this time, a spokesman said.

Icahn cited details from court documents related to a shareholder suit that were unsealed on Monday. The documents showed how Yahoo had taken steps to rebuff a Microsoft takeover bid months before the software maker made its offer public on February 1.

The shareholder lawsuit argued that Yahoo had taken aggressive steps to block a deal, including the adoption of a costly plan to retain employees, leading up to a breakdown in negotiations.

Last week, News Corp Chief Executive Rupert Murdoch dismissed Icahn’s role in the Microsoft-Yahoo tangle as a distraction. Speaking at "D: All Things Digital" conference in Southern California, he said Icahn was "not serious."

"Look, he wants to make himself a few hundred million dollars for himself," Murdoch said. "For Microsoft it is helpful noise. If I were Yahoo, I wouldn’t worry about it."

Murdoch said his own interest in doing a deal either with Yahoo or Microsoft involving his MySpace unit had waned after holding talks over the past year with both on various partnerships. He said he was "mystified" by Yahoo’s response to Microsoft’s offer but said he thought Microsoft would eventually reach a deal with Yahoo.

The Journal said Yahoo’s board was due to meet on Tuesday. Icahn was not immediately available to comment.

As Icahn Grumbles, Yahoo Sets Plans for Ad Growth

In the latest effort to placate restless investors, Yahoo Inc. president Sue Decker laid out plans Wednesday for building the company's online advertising operations, and Yahoo announced a slew of new partnerships.

The push is aimed at proving either that the struggling Internet pioneer can go it alone or that Yahoo is worth more than the last offer from spurned suitor Microsoft Corp. The two companies are still in "ongoing, engaged" conversations about various kinds of partnerships, Decker said.

Shareholders led by billionaire Carl Icahn have been calling for Yahoo co-founder and CEO Jerry Yang's head. Icahn and other investors say he improperly thwarted Microsoft's advances.

Decker told a digital advertising conference in New York Wednesday that she and her colleagues were "completely rewiring" Yahoo in order to better coordinate sales efforts across various parts of the online company's operations, which had operated as silos. She noted Yahoo has millions of potentially lucrative relationships with e-mail users and a separate group of people who use the photo-sharing service Flickr.

"We have the largest latent social network in the world," Decker said. Sites that exist explicitly to serve as networks, such as fast-growing Facebook.com and News Corp.'s MySpace, have become investor darlings for their ability to deliver marketing messages in a casual online social environment.

Yahoo has fallen badly behind Google Inc. in search advertising effectiveness, but Decker said the company has been steadily closing the gap. Speaking to a group of reporters, also on Wednesday, Decker said Yahoo intends build its already-considerable search abilities in order to offer combined packages of advertising to marketers.

"Our ambition is to be a principal in both search and display" advertising, Decker said.

Meanwhile, in a letter to Yahoo on Wednesday, Icahn said he would press for Yahoo's board to be removed if it didn't scrap a severance plan it adopted after Microsoft began its takeover attempt Jan. 31. The plan could have raised Microsoft's costs in taking over Yahoo by as much as $2 billion.

Decker said the company was proceeding apace with its various advertising partnerships and other projects - despite distraction from the Microsoft bid and resulting protests from investors.

"I'm proud to say it hasn't affected our road map at all," Decker said. "In a way, it has had a motivational effect."

Yahoo announced several expansions of its advertising efforts Wednesday, including a deal to sell all the display and video advertising on Walmart.com, the online store run by Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

Yahoo also said it would stream TV shows from CBS Corp. and announced 94 new members of a consortium that will begin selling online advertising across newspaper Web sites later this year.

David Hallerman, senior analyst with eMarketer Inc., a New York-based online research company, said Yahoo was well-positioned to benefit from the coming growth in online display advertising given its long expertise in the field and vast online reach.

Revenues from online display ads haven’t grown nearly has fast as search, which is text-based instead of visual and far easier for advertisers to buy. Display ads come in a variety of shapes, sizes and placements which advertisers can find confusing.

Hallerman stopped short, however, of saying Yahoo would become the leading player in online display ads, an area Google entered with its recent purchase of DoubleClick Inc.

Yahoo would likely do "better than most," he said.

More Laws, Collaboration Required for Online Safety

Washington state’s attorney general is only half joking when he suggests that perhaps sites like Facebook and MySpace should require members to use a credit card to sign up for access as a way to prove their identity.

"We need good age and identity verification technology so that it’s much harder for an individual to get online and pretend to be 15 when really it’s a 45-year-old man," said Attorney General Rob McKenna at the Authentication and Online Trust Summit in Seattle on Thursday. "There is a way to accomplish this quickly. It’s wildly unpopular," he said, before suggesting that social-networking sites require users to have credit cards.

In addition to online identity verification techniques, McKenna and other security experts discussed ways that businesses, law enforcement and policy makers must work together to solve cybercrime.

"We need to figure out what we can do not just with law enforcement but with each other," said Hemanshu Nigam, chief security officer at Fox Interactive Media and MySpace. "If there are bad guys in MySpace or eBay or Facebook, are they the same people?"

He pointed to MySpace’s lawsuit against Scott Richter, a notorious spammer who was also sued by Microsoft, settling with the software giant for US$7 million. The industry might have better success shutting down such people if they work together to pursue single actions, he said.

In addition, the entire legitimate online community should be on the same page in terms of strict safety and security policies, said Mozelle Thompson, a former commissioner on the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and currently a consultant. Sites like MySpace and Facebook represent implementations of the best security policies, he said. "There are a lot of sites out there doing nothing," he said. "You’re only as good as where the bottom is."

Some of the speakers pushed for new laws that might help companies shut down some cybercrime. MySpace would like to have laws that ensure education for law-enforcement agents, who need training, as well as consumers. States should require schools to teach online safety every year to students, Nigam said.

That kind of education could very easily prevent some of the most common online fraud, he said, including one technique described by Chris Siouris, a cyber investigator at the U.S. Postal Inspector. His office pursues schemes where people unwittingly sign up for a job advertised online that they think simply involves receiving items in the mail, repackaging them and sending them to a new address. However, they usually don't know that the items are purchased with stolen credit cards.

When Siouris and his colleagues discover someone has begun engaging in this type of job, they serve the person with a cease-and-desist letter and require them to sign an agreement not to do such work in the future or they'll be arrested. Rarely if ever has anyone engaged in the activity again, usually because they didn't realize that they were doing anything illegal, he said.

In addition to laws that would ensure education so that people realize that such jobs are illegal, every states should have antispyware laws, said McKenna. He also said that there should be federal data-loss notification requirements and legislation regarding spyware.

Washington state is seen as a leader in the country in its efforts to pursue cybercrime. In 2005, McKenna was instrumental in expanding the state's high-tech unit, which investigates cybercrime. His department now trains other states on how to bring spyware and other online crime cases to court.

Online privacy should also be addressed from a broader perspective, McKenna said. There is far more identity theft in the U.S. than in Europe or other regions that have stronger privacy protections, such as requirements for opt-in, rather than opt-out, for data collection, he said. "I think as a society we need to discuss more fully the affects on our privacy and the impacts on issues like ID theft from the extensive commercialization of private information that we've seen in this country," he said.

Amazon U.S. Website Down

Online retailer Amazon.com Inc said its U.S. website was down for about 2 hours on Friday and it was unclear when service would be restored in full.

A spokeswoman for Amazon said the site was unavailable starting at around 13:25 a.m. EDT, but declined to specify the cause.

Users in the United States who tried signing onto the popular portal saw a message saying the service was unavailable.

Amazon's international sites, such as amazon.co.jp, amazon.co.uk and amazon.de, were not affected, nor were its Web services, the spokeswoman said. Two hours after the outage, some users were able to access the site intermittently.

Internet content delivery company Akamai Technologies Inc, which counts Amazon among its customers, has had no problems with its network on Friday, said Akamai spokesman Jeff Young.

Time Warner Cable Tries Metering Internet Use

You’re used to paying extra if you use up your cell phone minutes, but will you be willing to pay extra if your home computer goes over its Internet allowance?

Time Warner Cable Inc. customers - and, later, others - may have to, if the company’s test of metered Internet access is successful.

On Thursday, new Time Warner Cable Internet subscribers in Beaumont, Texas, will have monthly allowances for the amount of data they upload and download. Those who go over will be charged $1 per gigabyte, a Time Warner Cable executive told the Associated Press.

Metered billing is an attempt to deal fairly with Internet usage, which is very uneven among Time Warner Cable’s subscribers, said Kevin Leddy, Time Warner Cable’s executive vice president of advanced technology.

Just 5 percent of the company’s subscribers take up half of the capacity on local cable lines, Leddy said. Other cable Internet service providers report a similar distribution.

"We think it’s the fairest way to finance the needed investment in the infrastructure," Leddy said.

Metered usage is common overseas, and other U.S. cable providers are looking at ways to rein in heavy users. Most have download caps, but some keep the caps secret so as not to alarm the majority of users, who come nowhere close to the limits. Time Warner Cable appears to be the first major ISP to charge for going over the limit: Other companies warn, then suspend, those who go over.

Phone companies are less concerned about congestion and are unlikely to impose metered usage on DSL customers, because their networks are structured differently.

Time Warner Cable had said in January that it was planning to conduct the trial in Beaumont, but did not give any details. On Monday, Leddy said its tiers will range from $29.95 a month for relatively slow service at 768 kilobits per second and a 5-gigabyte monthly cap to $54.90 per month for fast downloads at 15 megabits per second and a 40-gigabyte cap. Those prices cover the Internet portion of subscription bundles that include video or phone services. Both downloads and uploads will count toward the monthly cap.

A possible stumbling block for Time Warner Cable is that customers have had little reason so far to pay attention to how much they download from the Internet, or know much traffic makes up a gigabyte. That uncertainty could scare off new subscribers.

Those who mainly do Web surfing or e-mail have little reason to pay attention to the traffic caps: a gigabyte is about 3,000 Web pages, or 15,000 e-mails without attachments. But those who download movies or TV shows will want to pay attention. A standard-definition movie can take up 1.5 gigabytes, and a high-definition movie can be 6 to 8 gigabytes.

Time Warner Cable subscribers will be able to check out their data

consumption on a "gas gauge" on the company's Web page.

The company won't apply the gigabyte surcharges for the first two months. It has 90,000 customers in the trial area, but only new subscribers will be part of the trial.

Billing by the hour was common for dial-up service in the U.S. until AOL introduced an unlimited-usage plan in 1996. Flat-rate, unlimited-usage plans have been credited with encouraging consumer Internet use by making billing easy to understand.

"The metered Internet has been tried and tested and rejected by the consumers overwhelmingly since the days of AOL," information-technology consultant George Ou told the Federal Communications Commission at a hearing on ISP practices in April.

Metered billing could also put a crimp in the plans of services like Apple Inc.'s iTunes that use the Internet to deliver video. DVD-by-mail pioneer Netflix Inc. just launched a TV set-top box that receives an unlimited stream of Internet video for as little as $8.99 per month.

Comcast Corp., the country's largest cable company, has suggested that it may cap usage at 250 gigabytes per month. Bend Cable Communications in Bend, Ore., used to have multitier bandwidth allowances, like the ones Time Warner Cable will test, but it abandoned them in favor of an across-the-board 100-gigabyte cap. Bend charges $1.50 per extra gigabyte consumed in a month.

Firefox 3 Gets Closer, with Release Candidate 2

The second release candidate of Firefox 3 is now available for public download, according to the browser's maker, the Mozilla Development team. The release comes a little over two weeks after the RC1 was pushed out, and is expected to be the final preview version. The expected final code ship date remains some time in mid-June. The team decided another release candidate was advisable when it discovered issues with the first release candidate.

The new candidate also includes several new localization updates. These include Slovenian and Sinhala versions, which are still in beta.

This update doesn't include any new interface or capabilities, but is merely intended to let the testing community evaluate a version with several new bug fixes.

More information about the new browser preview and a link to download the browser installer is available at Mozilla's Web site.

Adobe Releases Acrobat 9, Launches Acrobat.com

Adobe Systems pumped up its Acrobat product line with announcements Monday of its Acrobat.com online services and a new generation of PDFs that includes Flash.

The newest Acrobat application, version 9, provides native support for Flash, an Adobe-owned technology that is a dominant format for animation and video on the Web. The new Acrobat also allows "rich PDF Portfolios" with a wide range of content types and real-time navigating with other users.

The PDF support for Flash combines Adobe's two most popular formats and allows users to integrate Flash-based video and application files into PDF documents. To view, users need only the free Adobe Reader 9 software. "Now," Adobe said, "documents can come to life as dynamic communications."

The new PDF Portfolios can mesh a variety of other media types as well, including 3D objects and documents, into a single compressed file. Content integration, navigation, branding and other elements can be added by a user, based on a provided or a self-designed layout. Adobe said this will make sales proposals, legal documents, and product brochures "far more customized and compelling."

Live collaboration within a PDF document is made possible by Acrobat.com, a suite of hosted services launched as a public beta Monday. The company gave the example of a salesperson sending a PDF contract to a client and then walking through the document in real time with people on the client side, all through Acrobat.com.

Adobe Senior Vice President Rob Tarkoff said PDFs "moved the world from paper to electronic documents" 15 years ago, and changed the way people share information. He said Acrobat.com continues that vision, combining "desktop and cloud computing to create innovative productivity applications" that change how people create, store and share documents.

Acrobat.com can also be used as a central location for storing and sharing files or to collect data from forms or comments from a document review. Other services at the site, which has a free sign-up, include ConnectNow personal Web conferencing, a PDF converter, and Buzzword, an online word processor. Buzzword allows documents to be coauthored and shared. Developer APIs are also available for real-time collaboration, file sharing, and conversion.

Al Hilwa, a program director at industry research firm IDC, said the new Acrobat "added some interesting features." But he also pointed out that it now creates a "schism" between PDF's paper-substitute role and its electronic role.

Originally, he added, PDFs were designed to emulate the "fidelity of paper," and now it's becoming more of an electronic presentation device - which could also be a reflection that more presentations these days are purely electronic.

The various flavors of Acrobat 9 - Standard, Pro and Pro Extended - will be available beginning in July, with prices ranging from $229 to $699.

Full-Feature IE 8 Coming in August

Microsoft Corp said on Tuesday it plans to test-release a feature-complete version of its Internet Explorer 8 Web browser in August.

Microsoft released a first test version of IE 8 in March, providing developers and Web designers a preview of the latest update to the world’s most widely-used browser.

The next test release, IE 8 Beta 2, will be targeted more at ordinary Web users. It will come with all the features that the browser will have when it is officially launched - although it may still contain bugs, since it is a test version.

Microsoft has not set an official release date for IE 8. The company released Internet Explorer 7 in October 2006.

Microsoft, based in Redmond, Washington, has pledged to deliver more regular updates of Internet Explorer, which has seen Mozilla’s Firefox browser chip away at its lead.

Last month, Firefox released a test version of Firefox 3, an updated version of its Internet browser, promising better security, more speed and stability, along with new features like a "smart" location bar that remembers and redirects users to Web site addresses they have visited before.

Firefox is closely affiliated with archrival Google Inc, which provided around 85 percent of the revenue of Firefox’s parent organization, the Mozilla Foundation, according to filings published last October.

In March, Microsoft provided a glimpse at the new features in IE 8. One feature is called "Activities," which lets users highlight text on a Web page and then take that passage into another Web service.

For example, a user can highlight an address on a Web site and, then in one click, call up a map of that location.

Spear-Phishing Attacks Have Hooked 15,000, Says Verisign

Two groups of criminals have stolen data from an estimated 15,000 victims over the past 15 months, using targeted "spear-phishing" e-mail attacks, according to researchers at Verisign.

Verisign has tracked 66 of these attacks since February 2007 and believes that two shadowy crime groups are behind 95 percent of the incidents.

Unlike traditional phishing attacks, which are sent to millions in hopes of luring some victims to fake Web sites, spear-phishing emails contain personal information, such as the name of the victim or his employer’s name to make them appear legitimate. In the attacks tracked by Verisign, victims are tricked into visiting malicious Web sites or opening malicious attachments, which then give attackers a back door onto their PCs so they can steal information.

After tinkering with their attack techniques in the first few months of 2007, the spear-phishers appear to be stepping up their campaigns.

Attacks have spiked over the past two months, said Matthew Richard,

director of Verisign’s iDefense Rapid Response Team. "The bad guys have really fine-tuned both the delivery methods... as well as their use of the data," he said. "All the e-mails target businesses in some form or another. "

In April, they launched their most successful spear-phish to date. A targeted e-mailing was sent to corporate executives, informing them that they had been sued. This attack worked well because it was novel, Richard said. "The subpoena one really took people off guard," he said. "Especially at the executive level. That fear of litigation certainly scared people."

In May, over 2,000 victims were compromised with spear-phish e-mails claiming to come from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, the United States Tax Court, and the Better Business Bureau, according to Verisign.

Verisign does not expect the spear-phishers to give up anytime soon."Now that they have developed this well-tuned system, they will just keep doing it over and over again" Richard said.

New Report Identifies Dangerous Web Domains

When surfing the Internet for safe Web sites, not all domains are equal.

Companies that assign addresses for Web sites appear to be cutting corners on security more when they assign names in certain domains than in others, according to a report to be released Wednesday by antivirus software vendor McAfee Inc.

McAfee found the most dangerous domains to navigate to are ".hk" (Hong Kong), ".cn" (China) and ".info" (information).

Of all ".hk" sites McAfee tested, it flagged 19.2 percent as dangerous or potentially dangerous to visitors; it flagged 11.8 percent of ".cn" sites and 11.7 percent of ".info" sites that way.

A little more than 5 percent of the sites under the ".com" domain - the world’s most popular - were identified as dangerous.

More spammers, malicious code writers and other cybercriminals can establish an online presence when domain name registry businesses cut requirements for registering a site in order to boost their profit and profile. The report doesn’t identify domain name registration companies McAfee believes are responsible for those lapses.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of companies are in the business of registering domain names; some are large and well known, while others are small and less reputable, offering their services on the cheap and with flimsy or no background checks to lure in more customers.

The fact that Internet scam artists gravitate to domain name services with lower fees and fewer requirements isn’t new.

What McAfee’s "Mapping the Mal Web" report, now in its second year, tries to do is identify the domains that are populated with the highest concentration of risky sites.

The servers for ".hk" and ".cn" Web sites don't have to be in China; Web site operators can register sites from anywhere to target different geographies.

Other risky domains include ".ro" (Romania), with 6.8 percent, and ".ru" (Russia), with 6 percent of sites flagged as dangerous.

Shane Keats, research analyst for McAfee and lead author of the report, said the increase in dangerous sites registered under the ".hk" and ".cn" domains over last year's report was caused in part by better data collection on McAfee's part on those domains and by apparent security lapses in some registrar companies' processes for registering addresses.

"My advice about surfing behavior is that if you're really desperate for cheap Prozac and the pharmacy ends in '.cn,' don't do it. Just don't do it," Keats said. "Find another place to get your Prozac."

Many Internet frauds involve fake sites for pharmaceuticals.

The McAfee report is based on results from 9.9 million Web sites that were tested in 265 domains for serving malicious code, excessive pop-up ads or forms to fill out that actually are tools for harvesting e-mail addresses for sending spam.

Keats said domain name registrars that are strict about authenticating that Web site owners are operating a legitimate business see far fewer malicious Web sites using their services.

Where McAfee found some of the least-risky domain names:

* ".gov" (government use), with 0.05 percent flagged;

* ".jp" (Japan), with 0.1 percent flagged and

* ".au" (Australia), with 0.3 percent flagged.

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